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A Marketing Handbook for Administrators of Adult Education

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# **Telling Your Story: Adult Education WORKS in Indiana!**

*A Handbook for the Indiana Association of Adult and  
Continuing Education (IAACE)*

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## *Getting Started*

### **Why “Telling Your Story”?**

The rhythm and cycle of adult education begins.... The students arrive, the programs and classes commence, and, before you know it, those students complete their work and you begin again with yet another group of learners.

“**Telling Your Story**” is about saying STOP, taking a deep breath, and taking a little time to celebrate your ongoing success story---what it truly means to those who, through their commitment to learning, have had their lives transformed, and to those who have helped make that transformation possible.

**We have a lot to be proud of here in adult education in Indiana...** a heritage of over 50 years of delivering quality educational services when, where, and how they're needed. By more effectively telling our story, we can:

- **Support** the achievements and development of our students and graduates.
- **Inspire and model** for prospective students who hear these stories what it may mean to explore adult education for their own lives.
- **Invite** business and community leaders to a greater sense of partnership with us.
- **Instill** a sense of pride about what a real commitment to adult education can do to transform a community.
- **Encourage** the importance of continued funding for our programs by our Indiana legislature and other funding sources.

With the needs for funding all types of education in the state of Indiana escalating---and available resources remaining steady or dwindling---it is more important than ever, through solid public information efforts, to make a genuine, human connection between

dollars invested and results obtained. The adult education delivery system here in Indiana DOES work! It is efficient, cost effective, and it is up to YOU to help tell this story!

## Ready, Set, GO!

### You'll want to...

1. **Review** the contents of this manual.
2. **Appoint** a chairperson or leader for your county's effort. This leader may be yourself, a member of your staff, an instructor, a business and industry client, a graduate, a community volunteer, or a trusted member of an advisory group. Most importantly, you'll want to appoint someone who has a genuine passion and energy for sharing what you're doing with adult education there in your own community.
3. **Gather and convene** a small group to assist your chairperson or leader. You'll want to look for persons with some of the following skills and capabilities---
  - \*creativity
  - \*writing
  - \*photography
  - \*web content production/computer skills
  - \*special events planning
  - \*personal contacts with community, governmental, and media leaders
  - \*administrative/secretarial skills
  - \*problem-solvers
  - \*visionary thinking
4. **Examine as a group** two priorities:
  - The implementation of a short-term, one to three-week campaign, prior to February 1, 2005.
  - The development of an ongoing strategy for telling your story over the following year, charting opportunities and events each month.
5. **"Sculpt" a message** unique to your own community, beginning with the overall statewide set of key "talking points" you'll find in this manual.
6. **Inventory your "audiences,"** using the handout in this guide as a beginning point. Who do you specifically need to reach? What is your most important information to be directed to this particular audience? What action do you want to call forth from each specific audience?

7. **Assemble your “tool chest”.** As you launch a communication initiative, what do you already have going for you in the way of tools? What new tools may be needed? In this guide, you’ll find a form for assessing your tools and how they can be used to reach those audiences you have identified.
8. **Put it all together** and get everyone on your whole team “on board”. Effective communication about your program is an “inside out” proposition. It all begins with how you think about and talk about yourselves internally. This is fundamental to reaching out to others. A portion of this handbook will help your program to explore the “inside out” aspects of communication and build more effective communication with each other.
9. **Ask for help if you need it.** As you prepare your short-term plan and ongoing strategy, there are many resources available to help you---in person, on the phone or via e-mail. All you need to do is ask! (To find out where to go for help, see below.)
10. **Launch!** Implement your plan, taking great care to check signals and evaluate your plan frequently as you go along.

### ***HELP! CAN WE REALLY DO THIS?!***

Yes---even with little time and money or few volunteers to help, **EVERY** program can do something to help better share their story with their community.

If you are feeling a little overwhelmed, just need to brainstorm some ideas to get started, would like someone to come and help get your team “revved up,” or even need supplies such as extra DVD’s, buttons, or logo sheets, you can contact:

**Kathy Copas**  
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Please don’t hesitate to get in touch! Together, we can make a real difference in increasing the awareness about adult education services---and sharing our successes---all across Indiana.

# **Constructing the Shorter-Term Public Information Campaign and Longer-Term Communication Strategies**

## ***The Shorter-Term Campaign***

As part of launching a statewide communication initiative for adult education this fall and winter, we are asking each adult education area or county to kick off efforts with a shorter-term public information campaign prior to February 1, 2005.

So, what IS a shorter-term public information campaign? This is a limited time period---one to two weeks---that you identify on your calendar to concentrate a number of public information efforts and draw significant attention to your adult education programs. You may want to call this campaign, “Celebrating Adult Education Week”

The reason for selecting a very limited time period is twofold. One, research has shown that media exposure and other forms of communication make more of an impact on the reader/viewer/listener when they are repeated and reinforced. Your goal, then, is to create a variety of exposures to your message, using a number of different tools, and compress these many exposures into a brief period of time. The result should be an overall strengthened community knowledge about adult education. Two, a well-planned public information campaign takes lots of time and energy. With limited staff resources and time, it is better to do a one-week campaign really well than to “lose steam” on a longer effort. This campaign will set the bar for your longer-term strategies, discussed throughout this handbook.

### **Choosing Dates**

As you think about possible dates for your campaign, here are some things to consider:

- 1. The IAACE is planning a rally for adult education at the Indiana state house sometime in mid-January. You may want to schedule your celebration in conjunction with this event.**
- 2. Are you selecting dates when you aren’t competing with a lot of other newsworthy events in our community and world?** Some examples: Your opportunities for media attention are minimized during times such as election week, the week of your community fall or winter festival, and the holidays.
- 1. Can you select dates that dovetail onto one of your existing projects?** For example, you may want to focus a public information campaign around one of your GED graduation celebrations or an upcoming open house.

2. **Is there a national day or week of recognition that would tie in with your campaign?** For example, a national literacy day/week or a day could provide a good foundation for your efforts.
3. **Are you selecting dates that are best for your staff and volunteers?** This sounds like an obvious consideration but it is always important to ask around and build greater ownership in what you're working to accomplish.

## **Make It Official**

Once you've selected a date and a name, you can add some extra importance to your choice by obtaining a mayoral proclamation. Each city/town has different procedures for this. You may want to call your local mayor's office and check. You will likely be asked to submit a letter. On the next page is a sample format you can use.



# **SAMPLE MAYORAL PROCLAMATION LETTER FOR ADULT EDUCATION WEEK/S OR MONTH**

To the Honorable **NAME OF MAYOR**, Mayor of **NAME OF YOUR CITY**:

In recognition of the successful adult education programs in this community, including **LIST YOUR PROGRAM NAMES** and the **CHOOSE ONE---HUNDREDS OR THOUSANDS** of students who have improved their lives through adult education and training over the past several years, we would like to ask that you proclaim the week of **REQUESTED DATES HERE** as “Celebrating Adult Education **WEEK/S OR MONTH.**”

We are planning a variety of activities to draw attention to the impact adult education has made on this community. Your proclamation would help to strengthen this effort.

Thank you for your consideration. If I can provide you with any additional information, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I can be reached at **PROVIDE CONTACT INFORMATION HERE.**

Sincerely,

**NAME OF YOUR DIRECTOR**

## Charting Your Shorter-Term Campaign

Once you have your dates settled and have looked at some of the preliminaries in this manual about inventorying audiences and tools, a strategy session with your planning team is in order. You'll want to specifically look, day by day, at what you can do during a brief (one to two-week campaign) to reinforce the adult education message as often as possible. Some possible short-term strategies may include:

**Building** a major media effort (more about that later in this handbook!)

**Holding and publicizing** a special event, such as an open house, an anniversary celebration, a community potluck celebration, or a graduation.

**Seeking** the help of area banks, utility companies, and merchants to place an adult education message on their marquees.

**Placing** colorful streamers, banners, or signs on the exterior of your buildings/s to draw attention to the campaign period.

**Inviting** groups of community stakeholders in for tours or special programs.

**Doing** a display at a high-visibility community location, such as a mall or WalMart---getting current students and graduates to help you staff the effort.

**Involving** your current students in special efforts that will also enhance their experiences that week, such as job shadowing or mentor meetings.

**Offering** to speak to civic clubs and church school groups.

**Arranging** for placement of adult education promotion in bank statements.

**Launching** a food or fund-raising drive to help support student/family emergency assistance or spruce up a part of your facilities.

**Holding** the first meeting of a GED "alumni association".

**Asking** companies and schools to place your logo and basic information in their newsletters that week/month.

**Distributing and wearing** buttons.

**Asking** your community cable television outlet to show the adult education DVD-video.

There are many no or low-cost ways to get your message out there. Be creative!

## **Charting Your Longer-Term 2005 Strategy**

Once you have planned a successful short-term launch, it is time to take a good, hard look at the remainder of 2005 and beyond. How will you sustain this effort and keep the public attuned to your programs and services? You can begin by:

1. **Gathering** members of your team and distributing pages of a 2005 calendar, with lots of room for making notes.
2. **Writing** in pertinent dates for school-related and community events.
3. **Thinking about** public information opportunities that tie in with those existing events.
4. **Brainstorming about** what you might create to call attention to your programs at other times.

While you likely won't have the time or "person power" to sustain a major effort throughout the entire year, you should strive for implementing a public information strategy every one to two months. The suggestions in this handbook may provide a good start.

## ***Communication: An “Inside-Out” Proposition***

Quick---when someone asks you about your job in adult education or the programs in your county, how do you talk about yourselves? **REALLY.**

It sounds like a simple question. The truth is, as human beings many of us seem to be programmed to focus on our day-to-day problems or limitations as opposed to our achievements. Here are some examples:

*“Well, we help a lot of people but we just don’t have enough (insert your favorite---money, staff, time, equipment, supplies).”*

*“Our (building, equipment, etc.) is just so old.”*

*“We can’t (insert your favorite) because we don’t (insert your favorite).”*

*“But we....”*

*“We’re all just overworked and need more (insert your favorite---staff, time off, etc.).”*

**Why is it so easy to default to the negatives and describe ourselves with all of those “but we” statements?**

The real answer is that we likely do it without even thinking about it. The problem with this is in how our talk about lack and limitation affects others. Most experts say that each person has an effective sphere of influence of approximately seven to ten people. What does this mean? If I say something positive about my work, that positive “buzz” will travel down the communication chain and help to shape the opinions and possible action (i.e. making the decision to work with adult education) of seven to ten other people. Likewise, if we speak negatively, the negative sphere of influence kicks into action, convincing seven to ten people that we are not a good place to be.

Here’s the really awesome part---EACH of these seven to ten people has a sphere of influence of their own. So, you can begin to see the importance of “word of mouth,” especially in smaller communities. When it comes to word of mouth, there are two choices. We can allow it to happen to us, for better or worse, or we can help to shape it.

## **Example:**

*A secretary in your office is at WalMart and runs into a neighbor. They greet each other and the neighbor asks your employee what's up.*

**Employee:** "Oh, I'm just here to pick up a couple of plastic buckets! With all of this rain today, we've got a little roof leak down at the adult ed center. So, I'm doing a temporary fix. Our building is just so old and dilapidated! Trying to keep the water from dripping in and ruining our computers---even though those are out-of-date, too...."

**Neighbor:** "Well, I sure hope you get it worked out and keep those computers dry.... My son has always been sort of interested in computers. But, he dropped out of school this spring and didn't even get his diploma. I don't know what he's gonna do!"

**Employee:** "Oh, well! I guess I see a lot of people in that type of situation... Say, how's your dad doing?"

In this incident, a, adult education staff person had the opportunity to take a negative situation, deliver a positive message, and extend an invitation to the neighbor's son to explore completing his GED and entering a computer training program.

**Our role with our communication program, then, is to begin by helping EVERY person who works as a part of our team to learn and practice conscious, positive talk about who we are, what we do, and what we have accomplished over the years in adult education.** We also have a responsibility to help each other become aware of the opportunities that exist each day, all around us at the grocery store, the dry cleaner, and fast-food restaurants, to extend an invitation to adult learners and businesses that can benefit from partnering with us.

**Now, here's how that WalMart conversation COULD have gone:**

**Employee:** "Oh, I'm just picking up a couple of plastic buckets. With all of this rain, we've just got a little leak in the roof and I'm doing a temporary fix. We've got SO many folks in our computer classes right now down at the adult ed center, we've got to make sure those computers stay dry!"

**Neighbor:** "Yeah, you know, my son has always been sort of interested in computers. But, he dropped out of school this spring and didn't even get his diploma. I don't know what he's gonna do."

**Employee:** "Wow---well, you know, we have a fantastic GED program. We could help him with that AND even help him get into some of the computer stuff he's interested in."

**Neighbor:** "Really? Well, maybe I should remember to try and mention something to him about that."

**Employee:** “Better still---what are you two doing next Monday for lunch?”

**Neighbor:** “Nothing, I guess. Why?”

**Employee:** “I’d love to invite you to come over to the center, have lunch with me, and take a little tour of the place---maybe check out our computer lab. I think you all would enjoy seeing it! I can try to arrange a chat with one of the computer instructors. Will you come?”

**Neighbor:** “Well, sure, I guess. He’s home on Mondays and I’m always the one who has to fix his lunch, anyway. It’ll just be whether or not I can get the car from my husband, you know....”

**Employee:** “Sure—I’ll call Friday to confirm. And, if you need a ride, we’ll make that happen, too!”

In this second conversation, the adult ed staffer has successfully turned a negative into a positive, extended an invitation, AND removed barriers (in this case, for example, transportation) to participation by a prospective student.

***Strategy:*** As you prepare to launch your communication strategy, plan a brief in-service opportunity (disguised as a real celebration with refreshments, decorations, and party favor noisemakers!). Create an “admission ticket” to the party. “Admission” for your guests is a list of three things they are personally proudest of about adult education in your community.

On the next page, you’ll find an example of a form you can adapt to plan such a gathering.

**ADMISSION TICKET**  
**An Adult Education Celebration!**  
**(Date/Time/Place)**

*Bring this completed ticket and enjoy refreshments and fun!*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The three things I'm personally proudest of about adult education here in this community are:

1.

2.

3.

## Kicking Off Your Internal Celebration

You'll want to kick off your celebration by reading the lists people have submitted on their admission tickets, complete with toots of the party favor noisemakers. Next, you can explain your public information plan and perhaps distribute copies of it.

Then, it is time to explain the importance of sphere of influence, positive talk, and the critical role **EACH** person plays in creating positive "buzz" about adult education in their community. (If you have some "hams" in your group, one excellent strategy is to role play the two WalMart scenarios and discuss them OR take that basic idea and create some skits of your own to make the point. After the skits, your goal will be to close on a high note of celebration, with each person feeling clear about your upcoming communication efforts AND a sense of their own important role in making it a success.



## ***Inventorying Your Audiences***

Who are the real “audiences” in your community for your message?

When it comes to thinking about who you want to reach with the good news about adult education in your community, chances are your first reaction will be, “Well, everybody!” But, it isn’t as simple as that. An effective, audience-based communication program begins with taking a critical look at specific audiences in your own community, their own unique needs, your goals for this particular audience, and what tools you already have or may need to develop in order to effectively reach this audience.

*In no particular order, here are just few audiences you may want to explore:*

**Business owners in your industrial park**

**Recent high school dropouts**

**State legislators**

**The sheriff’s office and community corrections department**

**High school guidance counselors**

**The local newspaper**

**Women at the local pregnancy center**

**The school board**

**The public library**

**The community radio station**

**Chamber of Commerce members**

**Nearby television stations with news operations**

**The Mayor’s office**

**Pastors of area churches**

**Persons who have experienced job layoffs or plant closings**

**The county welfare department**

**The three B's---barbers, bartenders, and beauticians**

**The economic development office**

**Workforce development centers**

**Day care centers**

Some of the audiences listed above may not be relevant to your own situation. However, there may be many more specific audiences beyond this list that you can imagine. As you begin your public information plan, you'll want to do an exhaustive list for your own area, using the sample form on the following page.

***ADULT EDUCATION COMMUNICATION PLAN***  
***AUDIENCE ASSESSMENT***

**AUDIENCE:**

**WHAT THIS AUDIENCE IS LIKE:**

**WHY THIS AUDIENCE IS IMPORTANT TO US:**

**WHAT THIS AUDIENCE NEEDS FROM US:**

**OUR GOAL WITH THIS GROUP:**

**TOOLS WE ALREADY HAVE TO REACH THEM:**

**TOOLS/STRATEGIES WE MAY NEED TO DEVELOP:**

# ***ADULT EDUCATION COMMUNICATION PLAN***

## ***AUDIENCE ASSESSMENT***

### **(A Sample Filled-Out Form.)**

**AUDIENCE:** State legislators

**WHAT THIS AUDIENCE IS LIKE:** They are receptive to us and really want to stay informed. They are very busy, they travel to Indianapolis a lot, and have a lot to read and consider.

**WHAT THIS AUDIENCE NEEDS FROM US:** They need to hear our student success stories. They need to know how we are making a difference in the quality of life for this community---helping people experience better, more productive, lives. They need to understand the unique constituencies we serve and unique role we fill here in Indiana. They need to see how we are being responsive to the needs of others in our community, such as business and industry leaders, and effectively partnering with entities such as our high schools, colleges, social services organizations, faith-based programs, and community corrections. Finally, they need to know that the training we provide is cost-effective and efficient. They want to know how we are spending our money and that we are spending it wisely and respectfully of our taxpayers.

**OUR GOAL WITH THIS GROUP:** To help them understand the full scope of services we are providing, the effectiveness of our work, and the successes and real impact we are making on the community and state. This group is responsible for making recommendations about, and voting on, our state funding. It is critical that we keep them informed and continue to receive the financial support needed to keep offering and expanding our services.

**TOOLS WE ALREADY HAVE TO REACH THEM:** We send out a quarterly newsletter and they are on the mailing list. We go to the annual legislative dinner sponsored by our Chamber of Commerce.

### **TOOLS/STRATEGIES WE MAY NEED TO DEVELOP:**

Inviting them to a luncheon and tour of our programs, asking for a one-on-one meeting with each legislator and showing them our new DVD/video, writing or e-mailing them six times each year with brief success stories about our students, asking others in our community (such as business leaders) we work with to speak with them on our behalf, providing them with a fact sheet each January with statistics related to adult education successes in our county and the state.

# ***ADULT EDUCATION COMMUNICATION PLAN***

## ***AUDIENCE ASSESSMENT***

**(A Sample Filled-Out Form.)**

**AUDIENCE:** Our Local Newspaper Editor

**WHAT THIS AUDIENCE IS LIKE:** Busy but generally cooperative if we ask her to publicize something for us.

**WHY THIS AUDIENCE IS IMPORTANT TO US:** Many people read our local paper and it is a good way for us to disseminate basic information about our programs. Many of our prior students or their family members have read about us in that newspaper.

**WHAT THIS AUDIENCE NEEDS FROM US:** She has asked us to contact her afternoons only and not on Monday, due to their deadline situation. She wants to receive any materials from us two weeks to one month in advance.

**OUR GOAL WITH THIS GROUP:** We have an opportunity with the paper to expand upon the basic notices we already send about our GED graduations and registration dates. We can share our real human-interest success stories and recognize our students and those who are working with our programs to make those programs high-quality.

**TOOLS WE ALREADY HAVE TO REACH THEM:** We send out a list of GED grads twice a year and send her our registration dates. We have asked her to send a photographer to GED graduations and one time a couple of years ago she did.

**TOOLS/STRATEGIES WE MAY NEED TO DEVELOP:**  
Relationship building---invite the editor to visit us for a tour with coffee/tea or lunch and a chance to meet a couple of our best success story subjects. Talk with her about submitting photographs taken by one of our staff members. Offer to write a column for their editorial page. E-mail six news release/story ideas per year.

## *Crafting Your Message*

A key discussion in the initial stages of your communication planning should be, “What is the core focus of your message?”

Below are the core components of our statewide message about adult education. After reviewing these key points, you’ll want to think about those additional points that are unique to your own area.

- The adult education system **WORKS** in Indiana. It has been a proven provider of basic skills instruction for over 50 years.
- Adult education is offered at over 350 sites in the state, making it uniquely accessible and convenient to student homes and workplaces in every corner of our Indiana communities. This unprecedented accessibility provides a solution to transportation problems that would normally create barriers for many poor or unemployed Hoosier students hoping to continue their education.
- Adult education statewide offers hundreds of classes with affordable year-round programming and flexible class times. The majority of these sites are located within community-based organizations. Programs include adult basic education, GED preparation/adult secondary education, workplace and family literacy, English as a second language, and specialized workforce training for business and industry, the unemployed, and underemployed.
- Adult education is high quality. Programs are delivered by a skilled network of licensed instructors, qualified paraprofessionals, and trained volunteers, supported by a model professional development system.
- Adult education is accountable. The quality delivery system is continually improving, as evidenced by standardized test scores and the tracking of employment, receipt of a secondary credential, and further education/training. Adult education has met its state performance goals for four consecutive years.
- Adult education is cost-efficient for Indiana’s taxpayers. While the demand for educational services has increased, adult education services have maintained level state funding of \$14 million annually for the past six years.
- Adult education identifies and supports a wide variety of learning goals---recognizing some students seek preparation for college and, for others, the goals may be more basic, such as completing a GED to gain a promotion at work, learning English on the road to U.S. citizenship, obtaining entry level employment, preparing an industrial employee for a long-term job requiring only basic skills, or simply helping a mother learn to read to her children.

- Adult education provides a special niche for those who have been out of high school for three years or less---who don't feel comfortable returning to high school and yet feel too unconfident to explore even remedial courses at the community college level.
- Adult education provides a “safety net” for a portion of our Hoosier population who, because of family, health-related, or psychological problems need extra one-on-one attention and aren't a good fit for college nor are realistically able to return to a high school setting.
- Adult education in Indiana enrolled 41,397 students in 2003. More than 50 percent had basic skills below the 9th grade. Nearly 60 percent were between 16 and 24 years of age and approximately 40 percent were unemployed and looking for a job. About 20 percent were low income.
- The adult education system, which consists of more than 100 providers, works collaboratively with public schools, community centers and non-profit agencies, community colleges, the Department of Workforce Development and WorkOne Centers, the Department of Corrections, business and industry, faith-based programs, and libraries.

## **Communication Messages That Are Particular to Your Own Community**

After reviewing the common message about adult education statewide, take some time to take a look at your own area and make a list of your own particular “talking points” about adult education.

To help you with this “brainstorming” time, a by-county summary of 2003 key statistics is included in this handbook. To explore more detailed information, you can go to the Indiana Department of Education web site and download a variety of additional reports or statistics for your county/ies of interest.

Use the form that follows on the next page to chart your local message components.

## CHARTING THE COMMUNICATION MESSAGE COMPONENTS UNIQUE TO YOUR AREA

1. What adult education accomplishments/outcomes are we the most proud of here in our community? (Examples: You have a very large ESL program. A record number of students from your county received their GED in 2003. You assisted the chamber of commerce and your local economic development office by offering specialized training that helped to bring a new industry into your community. A significant number of GED students in 2003 went on to college.)
  
2. If we could share three key pieces of information about our adult education program here in this community, those three things would be:
  - a.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c.
  
3. What are three specific human interest stories we would like to highlight as a part of the local message we craft?
  - a.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c.

As you complete this exercise, formulate your list into statements similar to the statewide list (or, simply expand upon those statements with information to localize your message). The result should be a comprehensive, well-rounded message that will serve as the focus of your communication efforts.



## ***Tools, Tools, Tools!***

You've polished your message. You've determined who your various audiences are and what your goals are for each one. Now, you'll want to look at some tools available to help you disseminate this message. We'll begin with some tools that are being provided to you by IAACE.

### **The IAACE DVD/Video**

The IAACE DVD/Video "Adult Education in Indiana: A Proven Provider" takes a look at the comprehensive success story of adult education here in Indiana. It was shot on location in Batesville, Columbus, Corydon, East Chicago, Georgetown, Hammond, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Lafayette, Jasper, Rockport, and Spencer. It includes success story profiles of students who have moved through different types of life situations and challenges with the help of adult education services. It highlights some of the work adult education programs are doing with business and industry, community corrections, faith-based groups, and post-secondary educational institutions. The DVD version of the presentation allows the viewer to access statistics by county and connect to pertinent web sites for additional information.

Between now and the beginning of 2005, you'll want to review the DVD/video and share it with key stakeholders in your community, especially your state legislators. Ideally, you should watch a portion or portions of it with each legislator, familiarize them with the navigation (in terms of the DVD), ask them whether they prefer DVD or VHS format, and present them with a copy for later viewing. You also may want to include a fact sheet about adult education here in Indiana, a copy of the IAACE testimonials brochure (see below), and other program-specific brochures or handouts from your own community. As the DVD has been in production, there have already been several questions about whether a local area can add stories to it or more strongly localize it for their own community. The answer is yes. You can use the contact information on the cover of this booklet to contact Kathy Copas and explore what you would like to do and what type of help you need.

### **The Testimonials Brochure**

Over the past several months, the IAACE has gathered a wide variety of written testimonials from key Indiana leaders about the importance of adult education here in the Hoosier state. You may want to present a copy of this brochure to legislators, media, and leaders you meet with there in your own community, pointing out examples from your part of the state.

## **Buttons**

The “buttons project” is designed to create curiosity and conversation around adult education success stories---to get the topic out there and create “teachable moments.”

Your supply of buttons includes a variety of twelve names and the message, “Ask Me About...”. A three-four line story is packaged and included with each button. You’ll want to designate a period of time (likely, your short-term campaign period) when you ask everyone involved in your program to wear a button each day and be prepared to explain the story attached to it. Obviously, if they want to continue to wear a button beyond your campaign time, that’s a bonus!

Always wear a button when you attend a high-profile community event, meet with a legislator or other community stakeholder, and visit with media. Offer buttons to those you meet with and ask them to please wear them in honor and support of adult education’s success here in Indiana.

## **Things to Make With Clip Art**

Later, you will be receiving two types of “clip art”, both on disk and in hard copy format---“Adult Education WORKS in Indiana” (the official adult education logotype) and “Adult Education A Proven Provider”. You can use this art to create a variety of tools. Below are some ideas to get you started. But, be creative and have fun with it!

### ***You can make...***

Signs for bulletin boards and special events (from GED graduations to your employee kick-off celebration)

Fliers

Posters

Brochures

Folders

A navigation mark for a web link

Letterhead (electronic or hard copy) for media news releases and fact sheets

Public service ads for your local newspaper

Buttons

T-shirts

Bumper stickers

Mugs and other “giveaways”

Displays at community fairs and festivals

You can also offer this art to organizations such as churches, social services organizations, and economic development-related groups to use in their own publications.

# ***INVENTORYING YOUR TOOLS***

## ***A WORKSHEET***

Now that you have honed your communication message and inventoried your audiences (who you want to reach), this sheet can help you to assess your existing tools and determine what new ones you may want to develop.

**1. The communication tools we have and can use right now are (please list):**

**2. Which of these communication tools are working and which are not? How do we need to improve what we already have?**

**3. What new tools do we need to develop and who should those tools be designed to reach?**

## ***How to Work With News Media in Your Area***

Establishing a solid program of media relations is a great way to help get your message out there. Working with the media is, first and foremost, about building mutual relationships. Look at it this way---you have information and stories in your midst that are important to the life of your community. The editors and reporters you will encounter are seeking solid news about people in your community who are making things happen for themselves and others. So, it is a truly a two-way street!

By contacting the Indiana adult education office, you can find a by-county database of media contacts as of this manual's "press time." You may find that some of these contacts have changed, as editors and reporters change jobs, but this is generally a very up-to-date list. You'll want to review this list and select media contacts that are pertinent to your own area. Once you have selected your contacts (i.e. once you know your media "audience"), you can lay the groundwork for building relationships that should serve your program well for years to come.

### **Preparation for Initial Media Contact**

Using the information provided in this kit and your own local materials, prepare a folder of organized information that can left behind when you visit with a media representative. The folder content should begin with a simple fact sheet.

The fact sheet should include the list of "talking points" you have developed under the section of this handbook on shaping your message. It should also include all pertinent local current data about your programs and services. That would include the names, addresses, e-mail info, and phone/FAX numbers for all key staff contacts; information on the names of your current programs and their locations, some data on who/how many you are serving in all areas of your work, your key outcomes for the prior calendar year (2003), and a listing of upcoming pertinent dates such as graduation ceremonies or open house-type events.

### **Making the Contact**

Now that you have an organized kit prepared, it is time to extend personal invitations to the media representatives you want and need to meet. Your first goal should be to get each media representative to come to one of your facilities for a simple breakfast, lunch, or coffee; a tour, and a chance to meet some students. While you don't want to greatly outnumber or overwhelm your media guests, it is also a good idea to invite one or two grads or key community or business and industry leaders who have worked with your program to drop by.

You can contact media personnel via phone, letter, or e-mail. As you weigh the option of making a telephone call, be sure to think through the timing of your call. For example, if you are calling a television news reporter, it isn't a good idea to call an hour or two prior to the 6 p.m. news. If your town's weekly newspaper publishes on Wednesdays, Monday and Tuesday are likely to be prime deadline times. You will get a much better response if you call outside of deadline times (and always have the courtesy to ask about the timing of your call).

### **Here is a sample “script” you can adapt and use to extend your invitation.**

*“Good morning, (use the editor or reporter’s name). I’m Jane Doe, adult education coordinator for Luther County. I hope this is a convenient time to call. (The editor or reporter responds and, with their permission, you forge ahead.). I have admired your work with (be prepared to name something---a story they have written, a topic they regularly cover, a pertinent community event/charity they have publicly supported). I know you are interested in stories of transformation and achievement and we’ve got a lot of great things happening here right now at the (name of your facility). I was just speaking to some colleagues about you today and we would like to invite you to be our guest of honor for lunch (or coffee or breakfast) and a brief tour and chance to meet a few of the people whose lives are being transformed by our programs. Is there a date in the coming month when you would be available to join us?”*

At this point, it becomes a matter of negotiation. You may get an answer that standard lunch times never work, due to work responsibilities or deadlines. Be prepared to suggest breakfast or coffee. The point is---be flexible and friendly and have as your goal to **get the visit**.

If the editor or reporter declines a visit for whatever reason, you'll then want to ask for an opportunity drop by their office and introduce yourself, taking a packet of information along to leave behind.

It can sometimes be difficult to reach media representatives, since they are always “on the go”. You certainly don't want to make them feel as though you are being a pest. But,

don't be afraid to make two or three friendly attempts over a two-week time period to reach them.

## **The Day of the Visit**

When a media representative is scheduled to visit, plan for your time with them to be friendly, comfortable, brief, and well-organized. Be sure to immediately ask when they arrive---“We have several things to show you during your visit, and we plan to be brief, but please let us know if you have a particular schedule concern.” This gives them an opening to say, “Well, I need to be back to the newsroom by 2....” If they indicate a time constraint of any type, adjust your plans to ensure they are well on their way in time to meet their schedule.

During the visit, you will want to tailor what you show and tell them to their particular interests. Some of this you'll know by your prior knowledge of their work. Some of it you can pick up from conversation. If you're listening and observing, you'll get a sense of what captivates them and/or when they are “zoning out.” Begin with casual conversation, then a tour and opportunity to meet some people, then lunch. Provide simple boxed lunches, offering a couple of options to your guest (in consideration of those who are on special diets).

During your meeting, be sure to ask some basic questions about future contacts. Here are some possibilities:

*What types of story ideas and information would it be helpful to receive from us?*

*How far in advance should we need to contact you when we have a special event we want to tell you about?*

*How do you prefer to be contacted---email, telephone, or U.S. mail?*

*How often would you prefer that we check in with you?*

*Can you use photographs if we send them? Do you prefer a high-resolution electronic file or a hard copy photograph?*

*What else can we offer that would be helpful to you in your work?*

*Is there anything we should be sure NOT to do?*

As you discuss these questions, this is your opportunity to present your folder of information and answer any questions.

## **After the Meeting....**

Send a simple thank you note, with your business card tucked inside, within 24 hours of your meeting. Here is a sample of what you might say:

Dear:

*Thank you for your visit to the (**your center's name**) adult education center. We all enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your work. (**Insert a sentence here that specifically refers to something you discussed while the editor or reporter was visiting-- maybe a statistic they wondered about, the name/phone number of a story contact.**) I stand ready to assist you in any way I can and look forward to being a partner with you and (insert the name of the media outlet) in sharing the incredible stories of adult education here in Luther County.*

Sincerely,

Be sure to keep careful notes about what the editor or reporter is seeking from you. Follow those preferences as much as possible. If you don't begin to hear from the editor or reporter as you continue to offer news, be sure to drop them a note every six months just to ensure you remain on their "radar screen." Your goal is to strive to be helpful but not intrusive and to be seen as a genuine, trusted resource they can turn to for news and information.

## **Your Longer-Term Media Strategy: *Think Like a Journalist***

You've made your initial media contacts... received some initial media attention... and set your plan for keeping in touch. Now is the time to hone a longer-term media strategy.

## What Is News?

What IS news---really? As you begin looking at longer-term strategies, you need to examine this very basic question. Hopefully, the journalists you've met have given you some good insight. However, here are some points to consider.

### *News is about...*

- **Invitation** to a service, product, or event that has relevance to a significant percentage of the communication medium's readers/viewers/listeners. The more people something affects in your community, the better.
- **Connection** to a topic that is already very much in the news. For example, an industrial plant in your community is in the news for just landing a huge governmental contract. Your program has provided ESL training at that plant. A newspaper does a story about local business leaders concerned about productivity issues related to employees who haven't achieved basic literacy. Your workplace literacy program has some great success stories. Your goal is to keep up with the news and make those types of connections.
- **Geography.** Community newspapers, especially, are interested in stories and photographs that involve and name local citizens. The more people you can include and name with hometown connections, the better.
- **Transformation.** News is about how people change their lives or are changed by outside circumstances---how they encounter a situation, move through it, and succeed. (Adult education has a bounty of these types of stories!)
- **Milestones**---anniversaries, things beginning, and things ending.
- **Trends**---anything that illuminates a social or business trend already very much in the news.
- **What's visual.** It is one thing, for example, to release a simple statement to media that you have achieved a first-time enrollment of 1,000 students. It becomes a visual news event when a local bakery bakes a ten-foot high cake and you hold a lively celebration on the front lawn with 500 of those students. Each potential news happening requires some creative thinking about what would make it more visual.

With all of this in mind, you'll want to turn to your 2005 calendar and identify potential relevant newsworthy events throughout the calendar year. Chart these events, back up your calendar one month from your chosen date, and designate that date as the standard time to prepare your media contacts.



## How to Do News and Photo Releases

**A news release** is the method you will most frequently employ to contact news media. As you make your initial media contacts (inviting them to your facilities for a tour), media representatives will likely share with you their preferred methods of receiving news releases. If you don't know the preferred method, you'll want to limit your first news release to U.S. Mail correspondence or a brief e-mail without an attachment. Sending electronic attachments (as an unknown entity) is discouraged because of the fear of virus transmission. Once you have established a regular relationship and are known to media in your area, attachments are acceptable OR an editor may give you a special e-mail address to send your materials.

**Photos** are a great way to accentuate the visual aspects of your story. Chances are, someone on your staff or among your programs is interested in photography and can be a good resource to you. Here are some tips on photographs:

1. **Good photographs are, quite simply, visually strong and interesting.** Take a closer look at some photos that are in your community's newspapers and magazines. Notice that most of them are taken close to the subject/s, show some type of action or emotion, and have clear, uncluttered backgrounds.
2. **If you think a photograph is "a little dark" or "maybe a little too light", or "isn't THAT good," it isn't a good photograph for news media.** Most community newspapers---your prime outlet for submitted photos---print on inexpensive newsprint that makes even the best photos tend to "wash out." Strive for high-contrast, well-lighted photographs where you can truly see what's happening in the picture.
3. **Avoid cliché pictures---check passing, hand-shaking, people lined up like birds on a fence.** Anything ho-hum! A lot of this comes in how you think creatively about your subject. Example: a local business gives you a \$2000 gift check to help renovate your resource center. You could show the business owner passing your director a check (boring!) OR you could place those same individuals in the resource center with student volunteers who are helping to unpack and assemble new bookcases.
4. **Digital or prints?** Good digital photography, transmitted properly, is excellent for those media outlets that are prepared to receive electronic attachments from you. But, good digital photographs are those that are transmitted at as high a resolution as possible. If you don't know what this means, you'll want to read your digital camera guide. Sending poor resolution photographs or files that cannot be opened is frustrating to editors and signals a lack of professional on your part. Know what you are doing before you "go digital." Good, clear prints are still a viable option. Be sure to protect them with cardboard and a sturdy envelope before they are mailed or delivered.

5. **Identify who and what is in your picture.** This sounds simple but is often overlooked. If you show people in your picture (and most good pictures DO involve people!), be sure to include their names (double-checking the spelling) and hometowns. If you are sending several photos, number the back of each one and attach a sheet with descriptions by-number.

## How Do I Write a News Release?

**A news release** is a simple, straightforward communication of basic information about your project, service, or event. Your goal with a news release is simply to entice media representatives to get interested in your event and give it some coverage.

In journalism school, one of the first things that is taught about basic news writing is the importance of including the “five w’s and an h”---who, what, when, where, why, and how. Added to that is the simple question, “Why is this story important or relevant---why would someone care?”

Try to open your news release with one compelling statement or idea that causes the reader to want to learn more. Keep it brief and to the point, open with a headline that sums up the major idea, and include detailed contact information for the person in your organization who can best speak to the story. Because reporters and editors often work nights and weekends, it is best to include contact information where you can be reached outside of standard business hours.

Should you send a news release in advance of an event or following the event? The answer is typically both. Your pre-event release should be geared to generating attendance and participation, while your follow-up release focuses on recognition of the significance of the event.

To increase your chances for getting an event covered by media after you have sent a release, an excellent strategy is to make a friendly phone call two days prior to your event. “I’m calling to make sure you received our news release about xyz. May I answer any questions for you about it?”

## Sample News Releases

On the next few pages are some sample, virtual fill-in-the-blank, news releases you can emulate for typical events that might be associated with your own adult education program.

## **AN UPCOMING GED GRADUATION CEREMONY**

### ***LOCAL STUDENTS CELEBRATE THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS***

**HOW MANY?** residents of **YOUR COMMUNITY'S NAME** will celebrate life-changing achievements **WHEN, WHAT TIME, and WHERE?** when they receive their GED diplomas. The graduation festivities, which are open to the public, will feature **MENTION A KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND/OR STUDENT SPEAKER/SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS/RECEPTION PLANNED.**

The graduates completed their work at **NAME AND ADDRESS OF YOUR CENTER.**  
The center offers **LIST YOUR PROGRAMS/SERVICES.**

“As a result of their work at our center, many of these graduates will go on to new or better jobs or college, **NAME OF DIRECTOR** said. “A number of them came to us a little uncertain of themselves or their goals and what they could accomplish. We worked with and supported them one-on-one and are proud of their accomplishments and excited about the bright futures ahead for each of them.”

Graduates who will be receiving GED honors include: **LIST ALPHABETICALLY AND INCLUDE HOMETOWNS.**

GED classes continue at the **NAME OF YOUR CENTER.** To find out more about how you can achieve your GED, **PUT CONTACT INFORMATION HERE.**

## **A GED GRADUATE SUCCESS STORY**

### ***LOCAL GED GRAD PREPARES FOR SUCCESS***

When **INSERT NAME OF GRADUATE** was facing **DESCRIBE THE SITUATION--UNEMPLOYMENT, DIVORCE, ETC., HE/SHE** wasn't sure which way to turn.

But, life changed when **LAST NAME OF GRAD** turned to the GED program at **NAME OF YOUR CENTER** in **NAME OF YOUR AREA**. **LAST NAME OF GRAD** will graduate with **LIST NUMBER OF OTHER GED GRADS IN THAT CLASS** on **DATE OF GRADUATION**.

“The whole experience of getting my GED has been amazing. At first, I felt **INSERT STATEMENT ABOUT THE GRAD’S INITIAL FEELINGS INTO THE QUOTE,**” **NAME OF GRAD** said. “But, with the help of the **INSERT NAME OF YOUR CENTER HERE**, I was able to develop more self-confidence and hone my skills in everything from math to English. I got a lot of one-on-one attention and assistance that really helped me to succeed. Now, I’m looking forward to **DESCRIBE GRAD’S FUTURE PLANS/GOALS HERE.**”

**LAST NAME** remembers the day **HE/SHE** got the news **HE/SHE** had passed the GED test.

**“ONE OR TWO SENTENCE QUOTE HERE ABOUT GETTING THE NEWS.”**

**OPTIONAL: ADD ANOTHER SMALL PARAGRAPH HERE ABOUT THE GRAD'S FAMILY, LIFE SITUATION, OR OTHER PERTINENT INFO.**

**LAST NAME** encourages others who have thought about getting their GED to call or visit the **NAME OF YOUR CENTER** and explore their options. The center is located at **INSERT ADDRESS** and can be reached at **TELEPHONE NUMBER AND E-MAIL.**

“Don’t be afraid,” **LAST NAME** said. “Check it out, see what they have to offer--- caring instructors and skilled staff who will do just about anything to help you, flexible class times.... Best of all, the whole experience can change your life!”

## **AN ESL-SPECIFIC SUCCESS STORY**

### ***LEARNING ENGLISH MEANS CHALLENGE, SUCCESS FOR (NAME OF HOMETOWN) MAN/WOMAN***

When **NAME OF STUDENT** came to Indiana from **NAME OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND PRIOR STATE RESIDENCE** and wanted to **GET A JOB/BETTER JOB, HE/SHE** had lots of skills and was ready to work hard. But, there was one major barrier to **HIS/HER** success. **LAST NAME** needed to develop better skills in the English language.

“I knew that, in order to get the type of job I was seeking and have an opportunity to advance at work, I needed to learn real English communication skills,” **LAST NAME** said. “I entered the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at **NAME OF CENTER AND AREA**. “It was a big challenge, and I had a lot to learn, but the instructors and staff did everything they could to support me.”

**LAST NAME** kept working at it and, now, **DESCRIBE THE RESULTS OF THE ESL EXPERIENCE IN A SENTENCE OR TWO.**

**OPTIONAL: ADD A QUOTE FROM HIS/HER EMPLOYER OR ADDITIONAL FAMILY INFORMATION OR A QUOTE FROM THE ESL STUDENT.**

**LAST NAME** encourages anyone who is struggling with English as a second language---  
or who has an employee or student who needs some help---to contact **NAME OF YOUR  
CENTER, ADDRESS, PHONE, AND E-MAIL.**

“Studying English can be hard. But, it has opened up a whole new world of opportunity  
for me.”

## **A BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY TRAINING-RELATED SUCCESS STORY**

***(LAST NAME OF COMPANY) DEVELOPS EMPLOYEE SKILLS  
THROUGH WORK WITH (NAME OF YOUR CENTER)***

When **NAME OF COMPANY** needed to **DESCRIBE THE COMPANY’S  
CHALLENGE/PROBLEM**, the **NAME OF CENTER AND LOCATION** was ready  
to meet the challenge.

“Part of what we do is go in and listen to what a business really needs for its employees  
and then quickly custom-design a plan to make it happen,” **NAME OF  
SPOKESPERSON AND THEIR TITLE HERE** said.

**QUOTE FROM BUSINESS OWNER/REP HERE ABOUT WHAT THE  
PROGRAM DID, HOW RESPONSIVE THE CENTER WAS, AND WHAT THE  
RESULTS WERE.**

**OPTIONAL: YOU CAN EASILY EXPAND UPON THIS STORY WITH A  
QUOTE OR TWO FROM A STUDENT AT THE BUSINESS AND/OR MORE  
INFORMATION ABOUT HOW YOUR CENTER DEVELOPED A PROGRAM  
FOR THE BUSINESS.**



**LAST NAME OF YOUR SPOKESPERSON** said representatives from **NAME OF YOUR CENTER** are always ready to meet with businesses, listen to what they are seeking in the area of basic skills development, and find the means to make it happen.

“Whether your employees need to brush up on their reading and writing skills, or just improve their interpersonal communication in the workplace, we’re always here to help,” **LAST NAME OF SPOKESPERSON** said. “Just give us a call and we’ll be happy to come out and meet with you and develop a program that fits your time schedule and your budget.”

For more information on customized business and industry training for basic skills development, contact **NAME OF CENTER/PERSON TO CONTACT, ADDRESS, PHONE, AND E-MAIL.**

## **Help! A Reporter is Stopping By---What Do I Say?**

Sometimes, without even sending a news release, you'll get a call from a reporter. And, sometimes, the story the reporter is working on may not be a positive one. What do you do?

First, it is absolutely, fundamentally important that you be yourself, be friendly and open, and speak with complete honesty. The most important thing you have with media is your credibility. It is vital that you are seen as someone who is reliable, dependable, and honest. If the call is about something positive, express your excitement---it is contagious! If the call is about a problem, clearly and accurately describe what has occurred and focus your remarks on solutions---what has been done, and what will be done, to alleviate the problem.

Speak simply, in focused, complete, clear sentences. Avoid the temptation to ramble on, whatever the topic. If the reporter's call is about a difficult or negative subject, be sure to conclude your communication with the reporter by mentioning a related topic that IS positive. And, as always, suggest ways the reporter can immediately get back in touch with you later if there are additional questions or information needed.



# **KEY 2003 ADULT EDUCATION STATISTICS COUNTY-BY-COUNTY**